

Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

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Happy Holidays!!!

How time flies! Here we are into the holiday season again, and this issue wraps up one year of publication for this sheet. I have learned a lot the past year, added some new tokens to my collection, gotten some good research information, and had fun with the hobby. Hopefully you have too.

If you are a passive reader of this newsletter and want to continue in that mode, please re-read the November issue.

The 40th annual Southern Idaho Coin Show was held the first weekend in November. Several Idaho tokens surfaced there including a new 12½¢ variety from W. H. PHILLIPS / WEISER, and EARL'S PLACE / FILER. I had to kick myself for missing the Weiser piece. I saw it and thought it looked different, so I checked my list and saw that I already had a 12½¢ token from the business so I passed on it. Later its new owner, Dan Lute, pointed out that it was aluminum, unlike the brass one I had!

From Greg Z. Manos:

"My earliest memories of tokens were a Henry Fields maverick token that I do not remember how I obtained it and a copy of the 1970 Idaho token book that my Mother (who also is very interested and knowledgeable about Idaho tokens) got from the Library about 1971 when it was discarded because the binding was broken! For three years I occasionally looked at the 1970 book but I had no idea how to obtain any tokens. Then in 1974 I started using my Dad's metal detector (a top of the line Whites GoldMaster 66-TR with no discrimination or directions!). Soon after that I found a couple of tokens like the "very rare" Fords Billiard maverick. Then I got my PHD in Privy Hole Digging and also found more tokens (one hole yielded over 70 Idaho tokens!). Another privy had three Perkins Restaurant / Pocatello tokens which was nice since there were three of us digging (the other two people were Myron Curtis who now collects Falls tokens i.e. Idaho and American, and Marvin Mitani (who dug the first and only known Rockford Idaho token that is in my collection!). I became an Idaho Embossed Bottle collector and shortly after started collecting Pocatello tokens. After getting what I thought was almost all the Pocatello tokens, I began to collect other parts of Idaho and finally discovered that I was not the only Idaho token collector. Since June of 1989 I have added at least one Idaho token a month that I did not have to my collection! Although I have collected many items (even nails!) over the years, my favorite by far has always been Idaho Tokens!"

Thanks, Greg, for sharing this with us! Now, the rest of you collectors who haven't gotten me a paragraph or two about your start in the hobby: get on with it! Inquiring minds want to know! By the way, the Henry Fields maverick is from Nyssa, Oregon.

Research Exchange

Many of us have had the opportunity over the years to obtain research materials like Dun & Bradstreets listings, City Directories, Gazetteers, and the like. They are extremely useful in trying to attribute mavericks, piece together histories of token issuers, and perhaps even find leads on tokens which are yet to be discovered. Greg Manos recently inspired an idea: how about getting a list of who has what and making some sort of a trade of copies? The Dun & Bradstreet listings would probably be the logical starting point as the bound directories are bulky, pretty fragile and hard to copy. I personally have a pretty good run of Dun & Bradstreets which have been separated from regional books, and have donated others to the Idaho Historical Library. For those who are unfamiliar with them, they are on flimsy paper, about 11 by 14 inches, and were issued quarterly on a subscription basis. A typical 1920s Idaho section runs about 12 pages and lists, by town, business proprietors, the type of business, and coded credit rating information.

Let me know if you have an interest in making some sort of exchange of these. Probably most of us who have them would rather trade photocopies rather than sell, but for those with nothing to trade we could probably figure out some sort of deal. I am aware of the fact that in many states, even the ownership of these resources is a jealously guarded secret. Presumably the reasoning is that the owner will have an advantage over other token collectors. Hopefully we are beyond that stage, and can share all the historical information that is available.

More on the Idaho Gold

This continuing saga of the two Idaho gold pieces is turning up some great information. Dick Magnuson sent me a photocopy of a catalog from the September 22 - 24, 1983 Northern California Numismatic Association auction in San Francisco. This sale included a number of small unofficial gold pieces from the west, and included the following background information.

Distributed by M. E. Hart Co., 560 Powell St., San Francisco at the Pan-Pacific Exposition (San Francisco, February 20 to December 4, 1915). The Hart firm not only sold these (pieces) singly and in sets of the three denominations, but in the famous and now very rare 36-piece COINS OF THE GOLDEN WEST sets in 8" x 10" copper frames. On purple velvet backing are twelve 3-piece sets in six rows: Alaska (12), California (12), Washington (3), Montana (3), Oregon (3), Idaho (3), all held in place by glass pane; ribbons identify the coins by states or territories of origin. The analogous Utah, Nevada and British Columbia issues were not part of the 36-piece sets and are much rarer.

The Alaska pieces were from the "Gold Pinch" series, dated from 1897 to 1911. The "California Gold" pieces were dated from 1849 to 1915. The ID, MT, and OR pieces were all dated 1914 and were as described in the November ITTN. This set, lot 1565, which sold for \$20. at the Exposition brought \$14,000 in the 1983 auction! Lot 1558 in the auction featured an Idaho Gold "dollar" which went for \$125.

The catalog explained that the earlier pieces (also the 1914 issue?) from the Hart Company were of 10 Karat gold and weighed 24 grains or 1 pennyweight.

Mark your calendars

The 107th Anniversary Convention of the American Numismatic Association will be held August 5-9, 1998 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland. I, for one, plan to be there with some sort of Idaho token display. I took second place in Western Americana in 1990, my first time in a national competition. Some of you may have seen my display, either there or at the Southern Idaho Coin Club show that year—it was a tie-in with the Idaho Centennial, a collection of one token per county on an Idaho map. My problem now is trying to come up with an idea for a display. To be competitive in an ANA show, one has to have a theme and consistently follow it. A collection shown must be "complete" or points will be lost unless the theme explains the missing parts. A display titled "Idaho Tokens" must have every known Idaho token in it to be considered complete, hence my 1990 display narrowed the field to one per county. Condition and rarity of the items displayed also play a part, but I recall getting marked down on both points, probably because I didn't explain the rarity of Idaho tokens enough and point out that oftentimes a token in poor condition is the best there is. Anyway, I'm fishing for ideas. Anybody have some?

Henry Billberg and Joe Thennis

Born in Sweden on January 22, 1857, Henry Billberg joined the migration to America in the early 1880s. As with many young men from Scandinavia, he went to Minnesota and engaged in the logging industry. He logged in Minnesota and Wisconsin until 1890 when he headed west to the mines of Montana. In 1893 he moved to Mullan, Idaho and went to work for Joseph M. Thennis, owner of the Palace Saloon. By 1899 Billberg had saved enough to take a 19-year old Irish bride, Delia McGraw, and to buy an interest in the Palace Saloon, which he took over in 1904. In 1908 Billberg opened the Billberg Hotel and Restaurant in connection with his saloon.

Billberg & Thennis
ESTABLISHED IN
LIQUORS

Old Taylor, Oscar Pepper and Hunter
 Eye and other high brands of Whisky.
 Fresh Beer always on Tap. Open day
 and night.

Imported and Domestic Cigars

MULLAN - - - IDAHO

Mullan Miner 9-10-1904

Henry Billberg
ESTABLISHED
LIQUORS

Old Taylor, Oscar Pepper and
 Hunter Eye and other
 high brands of
 Whisky.
 Fresh Beer always on Tap.
 Open day and night.
 Imported and Domestic Cigars

Mullan Miner 9-21-1907

Henry Billberg was stricken with pneumonia in December, 1916 and died on the 9th. He was survived by his widow and 5 children, Edward, Vera, Henry, Jr., James, and Elsie. The Billbergs had lost three children earlier, including their first-

THE HOTEL BILLBERG HENRY BILLBERG, Proprietor

Headquarters for Mining Men and Commercial
 Travelers - Large Sample Rooms - Steam
 Heated and Electric Lighted Throughout
 - - FINE BAR AND CAFE IN CONNECTION - -

MULLAN, IDAHO

1908 Idaho State Gazetteer

born, Oliver. Delia Billberg continued to operate the Billberg Hotel for a number of years before selling to Charles Ford in the mid-1920s.

Joe Thennis was born in Minnesota August 2, 1856 and came to Mullan in the 1880s.

(I have seen his name is spelled "Thennis", "Thennes", and "Thenness", so I will presume the token and newspaper ads are correct.) By 1904, Thennis sold his interest in the saloon to Billberg and went into partnership with Howard H. Burns running the Windsor Hotel. Burns & Thennis had another hotel in Spokane, however I have found no details on it. They sold the Windsor to Charles P. Anderson by 1908, and Thennis devoted his full attention to his mining investments. Perhaps not his full attention, because on September 19, 1907 he married Mrs. Catherine Harbinson, proprietress of a rooming house in Mullan. At that time he was reputed to be one of the wealthiest men in the Coeur d'Alenes. By 1910 they had moved to Wallace where he continued his mining investments, especially in the Nine Mile Mining Company and the Snowstorm mine east of Mullan. He later purchased from Henry F. Samuels the Samuels Hotel on Cedar Street, on the southwest corner of 7th Street. Thennes later bought the Hotel Wallace, across Cedar Street on the northwest corner of 6th Street, and ran the Wallace Corner. Thennis and his wife retired from the hotel business in 1914, moving to a home at 1028 Eighth Avenue in Spokane, from which he continued to pursue mining investments.

In October, 1926, Joe Thennis was staying at the Cottonwood Hotel while looking after mining investments in the Winchester area. After dinner on the evening of October 4, Thennis experienced severe stomach pains. A doctor was summoned and it was determined that he was suffering from ptomaine poisoning. He was rushed to St. Joseph's hospital in Lewiston where he died the next morning. His widow was his only survivor.

There are a number of Mullan tokens related to these two individuals as well as ones from the Wallace businesses of Joe Thennis. The Mullan ones include:

- MUL-25, BILLBERG & CO. / PALACE / SALOON / MULLAN, IDA. // GOOD FOR / ONE / DRINK OR CIGAR 25mm Rd Al (ca. 1899 - 1904, 4 known)
- MUL-25(A), BILLBERG & CO. / PALACE / SALOON / MULLAN, IDAHO. // GOOD FOR / ONE / DRINK / OR / CIGAR 25mm Rd Al (ca. 1899 - 1904, 1 known)
- MUL-2, BILLBERG / HOTEL / MULLAN, IDA. // GOOD FOR / 5¢ / IN TRADE 21mm Rd Br (probably ca. 1915 - 1927, 10 known)
- MUL-2, BILLBERG / HOTEL / MULLAN, IDA. // GOOD FOR / 25¢ / IN TRADE 24mm Rd Br (probably ca. 1915 - 1927, 10 known)
- MUL-2(A), BILLBERG CAFE / MULLAN / IDAHO // GOOD FOR / 6¼¢ / IN TRADE 21mm Rd Br (probably ca. 1915 - 1927, 2 known)
- MUL-2(B), HOTEL BILLBERG / BAR // Blank 21mm Rd Br (ca. 1908 - 1914, 1 known)
- MUL-11, BURNS / & / THENNIS / MULLAN, / IDAHO. // GOOD FOR / 6¼¢ / IN TRADE 21mm Rd Br (ca. 1904 - 1908, 4 known)



It's the Law!

Concluding the liquor act from the 1891 Session Laws of Idaho:

SEC. 15. It shall be lawful for regular druggists or apothecaries to sell, without license, spirituous and vinous liquors for medicinal purposes, upon the written prescription of a regular practicing physician of this State, who certifies that in his opinion the health of the party to whom the liquor is to be sold requires or would be promoted by the use of the particular kind of liquor prescribed. It shall also be lawful for druggists, without the license herein provided, to sell wines for sacramental purposes, and to sell alcohol for mechanical and scientific purposes.

SEC. 16. It shall be unlawful for druggists to sell spirituous, malt or fermented liquors or wines to be drank, or to permit the same to be drank in, upon, or about the premises where sold, or in any room or building connected therewith.

SEC. 17. Any druggist violating any of the provisions of this act shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, he shall be fined in any sum not less than one hundred dollars nor more than three hundred dollars.

SEC. 18. Any physician who shall give any person or persons a prescription to obtain liquor from a druggist to enable such person or persons to evade the provisions of this act shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. Any person not a physician who shall give any person or persons a prescription to obtain liquor from a druggist, and sign it in his own name as a physician, or sign the name of a regular physician thereto, or sign the name of any other person or any fictitious name, pretending by such signature that such name is that of a physician, shall be guilty of a felony.

SEC. 19. It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to sell or give away any spirituous, vinous or malt liquors to a minor. Any person violating this section is guilty of a misdemeanor.

SEC. 20. It is hereby made the duty of the district attorney, sheriff, and all constables and peace officers of the county or municipality, knowing of any violation of this act to make complaint thereof before the proper tribunal.

SEC. 21. The words "intoxicating liquors," as used in this act, shall be deemed and construed to include spirituous, vinous, malt and fermented liquors, and all mixtures and preparations thereof, including bitters that may be used as a beverage and produce intoxication.

SEC. 22. Section 1648 of the Revised Statutes and all acts or parts of acts inconsistent with the provisions of this act are hereby repealed.

SEC. 23. This act shall be in force and take effect from and after the first day of July, 1891: *Provided*, That all persons who have licenses which extend beyond July 1, 1891, shall not be subject to the provisions of this act until the expiration of such licenses.

Approved February 6, 1891.

Business changes

Many of the businesses which used tokens in Idaho were comparatively stable. These included general merchandise stores, hotels, and drug stores, especially those from the larger towns. These businesses generally had a large and/or costly inventory of goods or facilities. On the other extreme were saloons and cigar stores where the proprietor could carry his entire stock in a box. There is a story somewhere in Idaho history about the fellow who set up a saloon with a bottle of whiskey and a plank for a bar. These outfits often set up in rented quarters with fixtures owned or heavily financed by breweries or other interests; many were on the shady side of the law, but all were less permanent.

Most businesses had some changes in organization or ownership during their "lifetime". When a token-using business changed hands, some method of accounting for the tokens in circulation had to be made. I believe this is the origin of many of the non-wear changes we see on tokens (i.e. counterstamps, holes, file marks, etc.). During the closing of the deal, it could be agreed that the new owner would pay for the value of all the tokens on hand, and the selling party would be liable to redeem all which come in from customers. The easy way to tell them apart would be to mark the ones on hand in a certain way. Then the new owner could redeem all (unmarked) outstanding tokens, putting them aside to sell at face value to the previous owner.

Often, the distinguishing mark was a counterstamp of the initials of the new owner, but if the correct punches were not available, a hole could be drilled or punched through each token, or a notch could be filed in the edge. These marks of ownership change are legitimate varieties to be collected, but there are also random marks on tokens which do not relate to a new owner. It is impossible to distinguish deliberate from random marks, unless there are multiple examples, implying a deliberate mark, so most variety collectors will keep examples bearing any kind of mark.

Best regards,

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